(d) if so, the details in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH) : (a) State Bank of India has reported that it does not have any plan to appoint persons for marketing insurance products. However, with a view to improve customer base, bank may deploy appropriate number of officers, clerical staff, etc. drawn from branches/offices for marketing bank's products in the personal segments like housing loans, consumer loans, ATM cards as well as products of their non-banking subsidiaries like mutual funds, bank assurance, etc.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Hike in Petroleum Products

*31. DR. ABRAR AHMED: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of times the prices of petroleum products/LPG have been increased during the last two years, year-wise; and

(b) the steps taken by Government to keep the prices under control ?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Consumer prices of petrol, diesel, PDS Kerosene and domestic LPG were increased only once during 2000-01 with effect from 30th September 2000. During the year 2001-02, while no increase was effected in the prices of petrol and diesel, the prices of PDS Kerosene and domestic LPG were increased only once, with effect from 1st March, 2002.

However, during the year 2000-01, the prices of PDS Kerosene and domestic LPG were reduced once, with effect from 22nd November 2000. Further, during the year 2001-02, the prices of domestic LPG were reduced once, with effect from 17th March 2002, and those of petrol and diesel were reduced twice, with effect from 12th January, 2002 and 1st March, 2002.

(b) With the dismantling of the Administered Pricing mechanism (APM) effective from 1st April 2002, the prices of all petroleum products, except for PDS

Kerosene and Domestic LPG, which continue to be subsidized products, have become market-determined. The public sector oil companies are fixing the consumer prices after taking into consideration the prevalent international oil prices. With a view to facilitate smooth transition from the APM era to a free market scenario, the public sector oil companies did not increase the prices of petrol and diesel for the first two months of APM dismantling *i.e.* April and May 2002 despite an increase in the international prices. Further, with a view to contain the impact of increase in international prices on the domestic prices of petrol and diesel, the Government reduced the excise duty rates on these products by 2% with effect from the midnight of 3rd/4th June 2002.

Closing down of Life Insurance Corporation

†*32. SHRI RAMA SHANKER KAUSHIK : Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken a decision to close-down the Life Insurance Corporation of India or to make its functioning ineffective which has the highest turnover and earns highest profits; and

(b) if not, the reasons for extending closing of the year ending on 31st March, 2002 and what would be the effect thereof on the Corporation's efficiency ?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) The Life Insurance Corporation of India has informed that they receive a large volume of business during the month of March every year. Where money has been received upto 31st March (for which no extension is given) they allow time upto 16th April for completion of formalities. The formalities relate to certification of age, moral hazard reports and in respect of high sum assured cases references to re-insurers abroad for pre-approval and special medical reports. This year the Corporation received about 61.2 lakh new proposals in the month of March as compared to 53.1 lakh in March, 2001 and allowed two days extra time upto 18th April for completion of these proposals. This extension of

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.